

Washington Lawyer

Five Men Graduate From Superior Court's Drug Intervention Program

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Amid cheers and shouts of congratulations, five men donning colorful graduation gowns walked to the front of the courtroom at the H. Carl Moultrie Courthouse on May 21 to be recognized for having successfully completed the Superior Court Drug Intervention Program, otherwise known as Drug Court.

Presided by D.C. Superior Court Judge Gregory E. Jackson, Drug Court was developed for nonviolent, substance-abusing defendants who volunteer to participate in the program in lieu of traditional criminal justice system case processing. Participants must complete four phases that include random drug tests and routine appearances at the court.

At the ceremony, Cathy Odom, who graduated from Drug Court in 2007, shared her story of recovery and how the program allowed her to overcome her addiction. She said her experience with Drug Court and its staff made her learn more about herself.

"[Drug Court staff] showed me I wasn't a bad person, I just did bad things," Odom said. "[The program] planted the seed to let me know that I could do this, that I could do this without drugs."

Guest speaker Michael Botticelli, acting director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, commended the graduates for completing their journey with Drug Court. Twenty-six years ago, Botticelli was in a very similar position to those gathered in the room. He struggled with addiction and was told by a judge that he could either continue down a destructive path or seek help and improve his life. He chose the latter and recently celebrated his 24th year of recovery.

"I am here to tell you that . . . we all make mistakes, all of us," Botticelli said. "And we all should be given a chance to come back and to become productive members of society."—D.O.